

# PARISH CHURCHES

Turn'd into

## Conventicles,

B Y

Serving God therein, and worshipping him otherwise then according to the established Liturgy and Practice of the Church of *England*.

I N P A R T I C U L A R,

By reading the Communion Service, or any part thereof in the Desk.

O R

Plain Reasons and undeniable Authorities alledged for the reading of the second Service, or the Communion Service, when there is no Communion, at the Altar, or Holy Table, in an Epistle dedicated to all the Reverend Clergy of the Church of *England* who read it in the Desk.

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By *Richard Hart*, a Friend to all the conformable Clergy and Laity of the true and Apostolical Church of *England* by Law Established.

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ΜΙΚΡΟΝ ἔ μικρὸν ὅταν εἰς μέγα ἐκφέρῃ. *Damascen.*

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L O N D O N,

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## Reverend Fathers,

**T**O seek out an Excuse of this my Boldness, and to arm the Acknowledgment of a Fault with the Reasons for it, might better shew I knew I did amiss, than any way diminish the Attempt: therefore I intend to carry no other Olive-Branch of Intercession than a cleer manifestation of the Truth of such things wherein I do humbly conceive you Err, some of you; not wilfully perhaps, yet for want of a due and serious Consideration of the great Obligation of humane Laws in things which in their own nature are indifferent. One of which is the place for reading of the second Service; which place, without all doubt, is a thing in its own nature indifferent: But when a lawful Authority appoints a certain place, although in its own nature the place remains still indifferent, yet the use of that place is not indifferent, but becomes necessary by reason of the command, to which the necessity of Obedience is inseparably annexed.

If this be a false Position, I have nothing more to say, but if it be true, then do you err in point of Practice, which is not according to the establish'd Rule, our Church appointing one certain place, and you reading in another; and so by this means teaching the People this dangerous Principle, that things indiffe-

rent in their own Nature, remain so as to their use after a lawful Command, for the doing, or not doing of any such indifferent things, as they were before such Command or Prohibition. A Principle which undermines the Foundation of the whole Church, and being once admitted, leaves us naked and defenceless against all the Weapons that are or may be formed, either by the Papist or Puritan, against the most glorious Church in the World. And if we, who profess our selves to be Sons of the Church of *England*, should embrace this mischievous Tenet, our Church will be so much militant against her self, that her Enemies will in a very short time become Triumphant. They seeing your practice evidently built upon this sandy Foundation, do on all sides hit us in the Teeth with these things, and laugh us to scorn.

Why do you charge us with Nonconformity and Disobedience to humane Laws, which are but things indifferent, notwithstanding the Command ( say they ) for do not most of your Clergy esteem them as such, when they omit what Rite and Ceremony they please, though never so strictly enjoined by the supreme Authority? Do these things oblige our Consciences, and are theirs only free? If it be so, then we perceive plainly that the only way to enjoy liberty of Conscience, is to be a Clergy-Man of the Church of *England*.

Now what shall we say to these things? If we deny the matter of Fact, our Church Enemies charge us with Impudence, if we confess it ( as to keep our selves from lying we are forc'd to do ) then they charge our reverend Clergy with the same Crimes we usually appropriate to the greatest Phanatick, *viz.* Disobedience to the lawful Magistrate, and Non-conformity to the establish'd Orders of the Church. How



to avoid the Horns of this Dilemma, I do sincerely declare I know not.

I should be very glad if any of you would be pleas'd to tell me a full Answer that I may give to these troublesome People, who have gagg'd me so often with these things, that I am altogether become dumb, and am ashamed to receive so many Baffles from those Fools who make a mock of Sin.

I thank God I can defend my self well enough against all the frivolous and captious Exceptions which have been either made or taken by the Recusant or the Dissenter against the established Doctrine, Discipline and Worship of the Church of *England*; but if they talk to me of any thing that is said or done in our Churches, which is not warranted by the XXXIX. Articles, by the Book of Canons, by the Book of Common Prayer, or by the constant universal Practice of the Catholick Church of Christ; they had as good talk to me of the Roman Breviary, or the English Directory, and I can as soon justify the saying, either of them in our Churches, as any thing I have before mentioned.

True it is, that we have a most excellent Liturgy established by the Law of the Land, but in very many places little or no care had that the Subjects may have it whole and intire, without mangling and curtailing in such a shameful manner that by these sacrilegious ways our sacred Book of Common Prayer is become contemptible, and the People are come to this pass, even downright to declare their abhorrence of our religious Assemblies; when instead of paying that solemn Worship to God, which by the Laws of our Nation are devoted to him, we worship him after our own Imaginations, and hereby offer him the Sacrifice of Fools, which he will in no wise accept.

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Although I could instance in sundry Particulars, yet at this time I shall onely name one, which is reading the Communion Service in the Desk, where-by you take upon you to break an authorized Order of our Church, and to make a new one: The appointment of which Order pertaineth not to private Men ( as our Church saith very truly ) therefore no Man ought to take in hand, or presume to appoint or alter any publick or common Order in Christ's Church, except he be lawfully called and authorized thereunto.

Either you believe this to be true or false; if true, then you wilfully and contemptuously transgress and break a common Order and Discipline whensoever you omit or alter a Rite or Ceremony appointed by the Church, which though in its self considered, is but a small thing, yet by reason of the Contempt, that is inseparably annexed to the Offence in a Person knowing, and being verily perswaded of the Truth hereof, it is no small Offence before God, that is in plain English, it is a very great Sin.

Now if it should so happen that any of you are of another Perswasion, and so you are Dissenters in your Judgment, as well as in your Practice, why then did you subscribe to the second Article mentioned in the XXXVI. Canon, and play fast and loose with God Almighty, and put Tricks upon your own Mother the Church of *England*? Do you think that God will be mocked, or permit his holy Spouse to be cheated? How can you, or any other be said to use the Form prescribed in publick Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments, and none other, which you have promised to do by your Subscription, which is a sacred Tie, and yet immediately after willingly omit, or alter any one Rite or Ceremony, without a great perfidioulness!

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As to the Point of reading the Communion Service when there is no Communion, I do positively assert, that it is appointed by our Church to be read at the North side of the Holy Table, and that whosoever reads it at any other place, breaks the Order of our Church, and if he doth it through his private Judgment willingly and purposely ( as he cannot be presumed to do otherwise who is fully convinced that the Church hath so appointed it ) he doth not only offend against the common order of the Church, but hurteth the Authority of the Magistrate, and woundeth the Consciences of the weak Brethren !

Herein I have two sorts of Persons to deal withal, one plainly confessing, that 'tis-commanded by the Church, and thereby saving me the trouble of a Proof, but saying withal that he is at liberty notwithstanding the Command, and he offers some seeming Reasons for his altering the appointed Place, and says they are sufficient to justify his Practice both before God and Man, and whether they be so or no, you will see by and by.

There is another sort of men who knowing not how to justify their present Practice contrary to a plain Injunction of Authority, are forced to make use of an *Index Expurgatorius*, and having thereby in their own Conceit quite expung'd the Rubrick as to this Purpose, confidently tell me there is no such Command when there is no Communion, therefore no disobedience to that Authority which they own, and are both ready and willing to obey.

To every one of you (dear Sirs) who own the thing which others deny, I must answer with an *ex ore tuo te Fudico*: for you ingeniously confess that 'tis commanded by the Church, and yet at the same time most disingeniously prefer a corrupt Practice of some  
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ill principled men before your known Duty.

And for this you make several Pleas. First, you say 'tis the Custom of most Parish Churches to read the second Service in the Desk: and Custom in the major part of any Society, hath the force of a Law, and a Law which is introduced by Custom, is as much a Law as any Statute Law of the Land, because a Law doth not *recipere magis & minus*, and if you do obey that Law which Custom hath made so, you are as much obedient to the Law, as he that obeys an Act of Parliament. But how weak and insufficient this Plea is, judg you your own selves, when you have well considered the false Notions of such a Custom, which you too fast do run away with, not making any distinction between *corruptela*, and *consuetudo*, and little regarding the small force such a Custom (setting aside the Corruption) hath to sway any Mans Judgment who is rightly informed of the truth of this matter.

Now certainly most true it is, that a constant universal Custom or Practice of a whole National Church hath the force of a Law, and ought without all doubt to be observed; but then you must take this along with you, provided that no positive Law of the Kingdom intervene to annul that Custom, Practice, or what you will call it, otherwise the Rule is false: For to plead Custom against positive Law, is to plead that which was the Law against that which is the Law; the sole intent of all positive Laws, being to take away the binding power of all customary Laws to the contrary, otherwise there would be two Laws in being at one and the same time, commanding the one contrary to the other, which would certainly breed that confusion which all positive Laws are designed to prevent.

I Pray Gentlemen be pleased to consider what Mischief you do both to Church and State, by preferring such a Custom as this before an established Law to the contrary : Do not you by this means turn our golden Liturgy into a leaden Directory, and the best of Churches into the worst of Conventicles ? You may laugh as much you please, but this is a great Truth, because it is neither the Place, nor the Number of Persons meeting together that makes a Conventicle, for these may be Riots, Routs, or unlawful Assemblies ; but that which doth constitute it a Conventicle, and from which it receives its true Denomination, is the meeting in any Place above such a limited Number, and Serving God otherwise than according to the established Liturgy and Practice of the Church of *England*, which may be done in a Church as well as a Barn, as sad Experience tells. It is only the Observation, or non-Observation of all the Orders, Rites, and Ceremonies ( and none other ) which are appointed in and by the Common Prayer and Book of Canons, which gives it the Denomination of a Church or Conventicle. If all the Orders be regularly observed without Addition or Diminution, either in Matter or Form, 'tis a true Church, and a right Church ; but if any thing be Said, Sung, or done, in Church, or in private Houses ( where there are above such a Number as the Law appoints ) as the publick Worship of God, which is not warranted by the Book of Common Prayer, or by some Law of the supreme Governour both in Church and State, although hereby it ceases not to be a true Church, yet it ceases to be a right Church, and commences to be a true Conventicle, for I know no Medium between a right Church, and a true Conventicle, every Meeting upon the pretence of the Ex-

ercise of Religion; being the one or the other.

And so every Person in Holy Orders that officiates at Divine Service, is either a thorough Conformist, or a Non-conformist, I know no medium in an Established Church (as ours is) but if there be, I desire to be informed of these things, to wit, how many, or how few of the established Prayers may be said? How many of the Rites and Ceremonies may be used? Which may be omitted, which altered? Which neither omitted nor altered? And yet the same Person doing or omitting any of these things, may be, and remain a true Conformist; for if they be not limited to a certain number, then he that uses only the Lords Prayer, uses part of the Book of Common Prayer, and the most material part too, and may as truly be esteemed as true a Conformist as he that uses a great deal more, and yet falls short of the whole, either as to Matter or Form; for whosoever he be that alters or diminishes willingly in either, he is so far a Nonconformist, and how much farther he will proceed, no body knows but himself; but this we know by common Experience; break Ice in one place, it will crack in a great many more. He that wilfully breaks the smallest order of the Church, is fittest for greater matters. How true therefore is that saying, *MINIMUM NON EST NON NEG-LIGERE MINIMA?* And what a great deal of Mischief in the Church would this small Sentence prevent, if it were believed and put in Practice? for then there would not be so many *Secundum usum's* as there are now adays. Heretofore it was only *Secundum usum Sarum*, *secundum usum Herefordensem*, *secundum usum Bangorenssem*, *secundum usum Eboracensem*, *secundum usum Lincolniensem*; these were all prime Places, Cathedralls all, and yet at the beginning of  
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the Reformation this was thought to be a great Grievance.

But now every Parish, be it never so inconsiderable, prescribes to a *Secundum usum*; *secundum Usum* this Parish, *secundum usum* that Parish; and so you may go on, and name all the Parishes of *England* as far as the Town of *Berwick* upon *Tweed*, and so many several Churches, so many *secundum usum*'s there are, and yet the Rule by which they be all to walk, is all one and the same. Now from henceforth (say's the Church of *England* in her Preface concerning the Service of the Church) all the whole Realm shall have but one Use, and for this very purpose was a Liturgy composed to remedy the great Diversities in saying and singing in Churches, a Remedy very sagely contrived, but to no purpose, because never put in Practice. So much for that.

The next Plea I have heard some of you make use of, is, that the Bishop of your Diocess doth dispense with your Obedience as to several Rubricks, and in particular to this, which is a plain Confession that 'tis enjoyn'd by the supreme Authority, otherwise, what need is there of a Dispensation? which being so, what Authority hath the Bishop, or all the Bishops together (I say this with humble Submission to that Holy Order, for which no Man hath a greater Veneration than my self) what Authority, I say, have they to dispense with a Duty enjoyned by Act of Parliament? sure I am, that they may as well Dispense with the woollen Act, or the Act prohibiting Irish Cattell, as with the Act of Uniformity. Doth not the Book of Common Prayer itself, which is established by the said Act, restrain all Diocesans from making any order concerning any Doubt arising about the Use and Practice of any thing in the Book, any order that is

contrary to any thing contained in this Book?

Now from hence I argue, If the Communion Service be not appointed by the Rubrick to be read at the North side of the Table when there is no Communion, and so the reading it in the Desk be not contrary to any thing contained in the book, why do you require a needless Dispensation, and if it be contrary how can the Bishop grant it?

When publick Orders and Constitutions have been received, and have taken place, shall general Obedience thereunto cease to be exacted, in case this or that private Person led with some probable Conceit, should make open Declaration that *A. B.* Bishop of, &c. doth dispense with me concerning such a Rubrick? And although 'tis granted that the Bishop himself is a Person in a publick Charge and Authority, and all Curates are bound to obey him *in omnibus licitis & honestis*; yet if the Diocesan should command all under his Jurisdiction to read the Communion Service in the Desk, the Bishops Mandate without all doubt must give place to the King's Laws, and in all such Cases the King must be obeyed, and not the Bishop, because it is neither *licitum* nor *honestum*, to obey any subordinate Power, when the Supreme commands otherwise: Besides, when publick consent of the whole hath established any thing, every Man's Judgment being thereunto compared, is private, howsoever his Calling be to some kind of publick Charge, otherwise there could be no means possible to attain to any Peace or Quietness either in Church or State, unless the probable Voice of every intire Society or Body Politick, over-rule all private of like Nature in the same.

And this is our Case exactly; for 'tis determined by the King with the Consent of the three Estates, representing,



representing the whole Body of the Kingdom, where the second Service shall be said; and this is not alterable according to our Laws, but by the same full Authority by which it was enacted; not by any single Person, if he be a Subject, nor by any one of three Estates, nor by all together without the King, which is sufficient to over-rule the frivolous Plea of a Dispensation, which can never be defended without overturning the Government, by altering the Frame and Constitution thereof: to such sad Exigents are they reduced who undertake to defend what they have not beforehand well considered: For who would have imagined, that so small an Omission as this at first sight seems to be, should swell to such a mountainous Crime as to equal the Popes Pride in contending with the King for the Supremacy, and by little and little to subvert his Government: which puts me in mind of a Passage I have met with in *Plutarch*, which jumps even with the matter in hand.

*Paulus Aemilius*, a noble Roman, and one of the Consuls, afterwards chosen to be one of the number of Priests, whom the Romans called *Augurs*; when he did any thing belonging to his Office of Priesthood, he did it with great Experience, Judgment, and Diligence; leaving all other Thoughts, and without omitting any ancient Ceremony, or adding to any new; contending oftentimes with his Companions in things which seemed light and of small moment, declaring unto them that though we do presume the Gods are easy to be pacified, and that they readily pardon all Scares and Faults committed by Negligence, yet if it were no more but for respect of Commonwealths sake, they should not slightly, nor carelessly dissemble, nor pass over Faults committed in those matters: For no Man, (saith he) at the first, that com-  
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mitteth any Fault, doth alone trouble the State of the Commonwealth, but withall we must think he leaveth the Grounds of civil Government that is not careful to keep the Institutions of small matters as well as great. The Inference is obvious, and I must leave it to you to make the Application. And now I have done with the Plea of a Dispensation.

The next is, that it is very inconvenient for the People, who by reason of the distance of the Place cannot hear, and so are never the better, they neither knowing to what they should pronounce their *Amen*, nor when to say it; to which I answer experimentally, that though sometimes it may possibly so fall out, by reason of the low Voice of the Priest; yet the same Mischiefe attends the Desk as well as the Table: For if the Minister doth not audibly and distinctly read the Prayers (as in too many places he doth not) the People are as little edified by their being read in the Desk as at the Altar; and if they be audibly and distinctly read, they may be heard as well at the Table, as in the Desk: So that the Fault (if any be) is not occasioned by the distance of the Place, so much as through the indiscretion of the Reader, which he may help himself.

But suppose this Inconvenience were general, and as great as you seem to make it, yet we cannot suppose that the Governours of our Church should be so short-Sighted as not to discern it, nor yet so imprudent as not to provide a Remedy for it: But howsoever, be it never so inconvenient, this may be debated in a regular way, by those who are authorised thereunto, and the Inconvenience taken away by those who are vested with a legal Power for that Purpose (if they think fitting so to have it.) But for any private Parish Curate to take upon him, not only  
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to Dispute, but to Judg of the Conveniency and Inconveniency of a Law firmly established by the Consent of the whole Nation, and thereupon to alter the Law after his own Model, is no less a piece of Insolence then to take upon him to be King, Bishop, and Priest of his own Parish, by imposing his own Laws upon the People, and cancelling those of his Superiors.

Some of you say that it is very indecent for the Priest to go out of the Desk up to the Altar in his Surplice, and to come back again with his Surplice still on, to the Homily or Sermon (which by the way, being part of Administration of the divine Service, is to be performed with the Surplice on) and to return back again to read the Prayer for the Church Militant, as they are appointed to do. In Answer whereunto, although my former Answer to the Plea of Inconvenience might serve very well, yet by the way I cannot but observe that these very Men, who have been so Eagle-sighted as to spy out this great Indecency; yet when the same thing is done at another place, they cannot discern the Indecency: For when a Child is to be Baptized at the Font, they can go out of the Desk in their Surplice after the second Lesson, and return to the same place without any Blushing, as if the going up to the East end of the Church in a Surplice, were a very unseemly Posture, and yet going down to the West end in the same Garment, were a very comely Gesture. *Risum teneatis?*

Have you any more to say in your own defence? I pray let me hear it, that I may leave no Objection unanswered: For if I cannot Answer all that can be supposed against my Assertion, I had better say nothing; and if there be the least colour of Reason or Argument on your Behalfs, I am willing to admit it,  
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and stop my Pen, as soon as you have stop'd my Mouth with a convincing Reason.

You say that our Governours connive at the Omifion of your Duty, they wink at your Practice, and take no notice of your doings, the Laws are not executed upon you, as they are upon other Persons, you hear of no Inditements at the Affizes or Sessions, no Information in the Crown Office, and this to you is esteem'd a sufficient Warrant for your present Practice, this seems to you a tacit Declaration, that the supreme Power doth not desire his Law should be obey'd in this particular.

And by reason of this Impunity you fancy that 'tis his Majesties Pleasure that you should take this Liberty against his Laws, and therefore, that I am justly to be Blam'd, who being but a private Person have expressed greater Severity against you than the Magistrate himself; because I have charged you with the Guilt of Sin, when the Magistrate doth not so much as punish you. Whereas in truth 'tis not I that lay any such thing to your Charge, but the Church of *England*, whose Words I have only quoted, that the wilful and contemptuous Transgression, and breaking of a common Order and Discipline (as this is, whereof we now Treat) is no small Offence before God, as I told you before.

Is not this the full Substance of your Plea? and is not this your Logick? You are not punished for your Disobedience: *Ergo*, 'tis lawful to Disobey. You fancy 'tis his Majesties Pleasure that you should not Obey: *Ergo*, it is so. His Majesties Law is not Executed: *Ergo*, 'tis no binding Law. What a many *Nonsequiturs* are here? What kind of Syllogism will you make of this? There is such a Steeple as *Tenterden* Steeple: *Ergo*, 'tis the cause of *Goodwin* Sands,

Sands, as good an *Ergo* as any of the former.

But I must not let this pass thus. You say 'tis his Majesties Pleasure you should enjoy your Liberty in this Matter; it may be so for ought I know, but if it should prove otherwise, as it is more than an even lay that it doth, then have you been overbold with his Sacred Majesty, by pretending to be of his Cabinet Council, which is more than probable that you are not.

We his poor Subjects are satisfied with his known Will and Pleasure, publicly declared in his Laws, without listening at the Privy Council Door to know what his secret Will is, before it is his Pleasure to make it known: And as soon as his Majesty graciously vouchsafes to declare any thing in Opposition to that which is established by Law, I shall obey it with all Submission and Reverence, humbly and silently acquiescing in the Determination of his Will and Pleasure, which to me is, and shall ever be a Law as binding as any Act of Parliament since the Conquest. In the mean time, if his Majesty hath whispered this so softly, that none could hear it but your selves, blame not me who know nothing of the matter, and yet notwithstanding have great cause to think that my Knowledge is not inferior to yours in this Particular.

If his Majesty hath communicated his private Will to you, speak it out, and let us know it; and you silence me for ever: But I pray have a care how you make it an Argument to justify what you do, by saying that the King takes no notice of that Licence you have given your self; and do not persuade your selves, that 'tis as good as if you had a Licence from his Majesty himself for your unlawful Practice, for so I must make bold to call it until I know further of this matter.

If see no Proof so much as offered at for his Majesties Pleasure in this Affair, except it be the Non-execution of his Laws, which may be imputed to the Neglect of his Officers and Ministers in the Discharge of their Duty. But if to serve your turn you will say 'tis an Argument of his Will and not of their Neglect; you must unavoidably serve somebodys Turn besides your own, therefore you had better let this Argument alone, lest some others take it out of your Mouths, and make use of it against your selves.

Another pretty sort of Argument others make use of, which though it little deserves an Answer, yet I shall briefly say something to it, and so finish with you worthy Gentlemen who confess the Command, and yet practise quite Opposite to it. You say that the People are not pleased with it, otherwise you would very willingly go up to the Altar, or Holy Table, but if you should, the People would go out of the Church, and perhaps come no more. In good time! Must the Orders of the Church hang upon so slender a Thred, as the liking, or disliking of an ignorant Multitude? Must the Shepherd go whither the Sheep would have him, and no further, for fear of displeasing the Sheep? Is the Government of our Church so precarious? If this be the Case, you may shut up the Church Doors and write over them *DOLENS DICO, GEMENS DENUNTIO, SACERDOTIUM QUOD APUD NOS INTUS CECIDIT FORIS DIU STARE NON POTERIT: CITO ENIM ACTUM ERIT DE ECCLESIA ANGLICANA.*

And now I have something to say to you Reverend Sirs, who say that there is no Rubrick, neither was it ever the Intention of the Church, that there should



should be one for the reading the Communion Service at the North side of the Table when there is no Communion; You cannot see such a Rubrick. What? are there no Rubricks at all to direct the orderly reading of those Prayers and other Religious Duties which are to be performed when there is no Communion? Do you never Preach but when there is a Communion? Yes, yes, there is a plain Rubrick for it, Then shall follow the Sermon. You can read that Sirs without a pair of Spectacles I perceive very well; but kind Sirs, according to your own Construction of the Rubricks, this is only when there is a Communion: for the next immediate Rubrick is, Then shall the Priest return to the Lord's Table. Can any one be properly said to return to the Place he was not at before? And if he was at it before, then there must be a Communion, say you; but if there be no Communion, and the appointed Rubricks serve only for Communion-time, then there is no Sermon appointed, say I, so that either you must acknowledg that all the same Rubricks belong to the Communion Service when there is no Communion, as well as when there is one, or else what will become of your great *DIANA* the *SERMON*: Methinks for the dear sake of that *Unum Necessarium*, that *Magnum Oportet*; you should be more kind to that part of the Liturgy, which gives the sole Authority to your Sermon. I beseech you (gentle Sirs) deal not so unworthily with your own Mother, as to wink hard against the Light, and wilfully not to see your way, when She commands you to go up to the Altar, and yet to be as quick-sighted as an Eagle when you ascend the Pulpit.

How comes it to pass that you should be blinder than the Presbyterians, for if you do not see this Rubrick of Reading at the North side of the Table when there

is no Communion 'tis really so, for they spied out this hidden Rubrick, and fain would have been rid of it, it being a great Eye-fore to them, and they would fain have exchanged Conditions with you, that they might have been so blind as not to have seen it; but since they did too plainly Discern it, no remedy now but to desire the Bishops at the grand Debate at the *Savoy*, when our gracious King was first restored to his Crown, that the Minister be not required to rehearse any part of the Liturgy at the Communion Table, save only those parts which properly belong to the Lord's Supper, and that at such time onely when the Holy Supper is Administred. These are the very Words of their Request, by which it appears so plain that a blind Man may see it, that by the Rubrick before the Communion Office, The Priest standing at the North-side of the Table shall say, &c. The Presbyterians themselves, who are apt enough to pick holes in the Churches Orders if they be against their Humour, yet could not do it here; for they could make no other Construction of it, agreeable either with Sense or Reason, but this; that at all times when any part of the Communion Service was to be read, there lay an Obligation upon all Priests, by Virtue only of that Rubrick. And the Priest standing, &c. to read that Part at the Communion Table, when there was no Communion, or else to what purpose was this Request of theirs? and why did the Reverend Bishops make such an Answer as they did?

The Answer is this, That the Minister should not Read the Communion Service at the Communion Table, is not reasonable to demand, since all the Primitive Church used it; and if we do not observe that golden Rule of the venerable Council of *Nice*, let ancient Customs prevail till Reason plainly requires the contrary.



contrary, we shall give Offence to sober Christians by causeless departure from Catholique Usage, and a greater Advantage to the Enemies of our Church, than our Brethren I hope would willingly grant. The Priest standing at the Communion Table, seemeth to give us an Invitation to the Holy Sacrament, and minds us of our Duty, viz. To Receive the Holy Communion, some at least every Sunday; and though we neglect our Duty, 'tis fit the Church should keep her standing.

Observe that, and if you find no reason in what the Reverend Bishops say, use your Liberty still for a Cloak of Nonconformity, and remember 'tis but a Cloak, and such a one, as you had better be stark naked than be covered with.

And now it remains that I should produce some unquestionable Authorities to back my Reasons, that it may appear to all unbiaſſed Persons, That the Judgment of all the great Worthies of our Church, who have either occasionally, or on set Purpose treated of this matter, is unanimously this.

The Communion Service ought to be read according to the Rule Prescribed in our Book of Common Prayer, at the North side of the Table, as well when there is no Communion, as well as when there is one.

I will begin with the most judicious Mr. Hooker, who in his fifth Book, Sect. 30. hath these Words.

*Some (meaning some parts of our Liturgy) are such, as albeit they serve to singular good Purpose, even when there is no Communion Administred, nevertheless being devised at the first for that Purpose, are at the Table of the Lord for that Cause also commonly Read.*

The next Authority is the great Arch Bishop *Laud*, second unto the Reverend Father *Hooker*, only in time, who in a Speech in the *Star Chamber*, to which  
very.

very few of you can pretend to be Strangers, say's thus.

*The Eleventh Innovation is the Reading of the second Service at the Communion Table or the Altar.* To this I can truly say that since my own Memory this was in use in very many Places, as being most proper: ( for those Prayers are then Read which both precede, and follow the Communion ) and by little and little this ancient Custom was altered, and in those places first where the Emissaries of this Faction came to Preach. And now if any one in Authority offer to reduce this ancient Course of the Church, 'tis by and by called an Innovation. Secondly, with this the Rubricks of the Common Prayer-Book agree; for the first Rubrick after the Communion tells us that upon Holydaies, though there be no Communion, yet all else that's appointed at the Communion shall be read. Shall be read? that's true, but where? Why the last Rubrick before the Communion tells us, that the Priest standing at the North side of the Holy Table, shall say the Lord's Prayer with that which follows. So that not only the Communion, but the Prayers which accompany the Communion ( which are commonly called the Second Service ) are to be read at the Communion Table: Therefore if this be an Innovation, 'tis made by the Rubricks, not by the Prelates.

Now let us see what the Right Reverend Bishop of *Norwich*, Dr. *Sparrow*, say's to this Matter. In his *Rational* of the Common Prayer p. 239. thus he say's.

*Private and solitary Communion of the Priest the Church allows not, and therefore when other cannot be had, she appoints only so much of the Service as relates not of necessity to a private Communion, and that to be said at the Holy Table, and upon good Reason. The Church thereby keeping as it were her Ground, visibly minding*

*mindin*g us of what *She* desires and labors towards our more frequent Access to that Holy Table. Mark the several Reasons, and weigh the great Authority of this famous Triumvirate of the Church of *England*, and then Read the Second Service hereafter in the Desk if you can.

There be some others of no mean Credit in the Church of *England*, who have positively asserted the same thing, *viz.* Dr. *Heylin* in his Introduction to Arch Bishop *Laud's* Life p. 22. Mr. *Elborow* in his Exposition of the Book of Common Prayer p. 98. *Hammond le Strang* in his Alliance of Divine Offices p. 122, 123. to which I may add a fourth, which is Dr. *Combers* in his Companion to the Altar, the Page I have forgot, though the Matter I very well remember.

Now if after all these Reasons and Authorities there remains any Doubt, as I believe there may do with those that are resolved to doubt, that they may have some Colour for their restless Opposition to the Churches wholesom Institutions; I have one thing more to say, which because it hath wrought upon some, and not only Convinced them, but Converted; as obstinate as they seemed to be, I am in good Hopes it may have the same Operation upon some others. Let me intreat all you that have any Kindness left for the distressed Church of *England*, to cast an impartial Eye upon the Forms of Common Prayer, upon several Occasions of Fasting and Thanksgiving, set forth by Authority, shall I say, since the King's happy Restoration, or since the blessed Reformation? Peruse them all if you please, and you shall find that in none of them all is there a Communion appointed, nor any appears to be intended: but only so much of the Communion Service is therein prescribed to be Read

as on other Holydays is by the Common Prayer Book appointed to be Read when there is no Communion, and yet 'tis said expressly, The Priest standing at the North side of the Table shall say, &c.

What more clear than this, to tell us the meaning of the Rubrick in the Book of Common Prayer, unless it be the Practice of the Prime Churches in *England*, the King's Chappel, the Cathedrals, the two Universities, and many Orthodox Parish Churches, to wit, that of Dr. *Hicks*, that of Dr. *Sherlock*, that of Dr. *Dove*, and if I be not Misinformed that of Mr. *Pelling*, all Famous, Reverend, and Worthy Divines within the City of *London*, and I question not but the pious Example of such conscientious Men, hath had an Influence upon some parts of the Country, some I am sure I know, and others I have heard of; I pray God increase their Number, not by confounding the Persons of any who do otherwise, but by converting their Judgments, and confounding those Devices they make use of to hinder all manner of Impression that can be made upon them either by Reason or Authority; the chiefest of which I find to be a *Ne videamur semel errasse*. A Principle too bad to be own'd, and yet too true to be denyed: Recommending you to God's Grace, I take my Leave of you all, leaving this short saying with you, *Veritas est magna & praevalabit*.

*Christianus mihi Nomen est,*

*Catholicus Cognomen.*

R. H.

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